

Guidance for In Person Family Time for Social Workers

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to safely resume in-person Family Time for children and youth in placement. DCF recognizes spending time with parents, siblings, and family members is a vital part of maintaining and strengthening family and cultural connections for children in care. These guidelines follow recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) to ensure the safety of all participants and to prevent further spread of COVID-19. Virtual Family Time can support and supplement in-person Family Time and is encouraged when in-person Family Time cannot occur.

Scheduling Family Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Social Worker should contact the parents and caregiver/provider to schedule a date, time, and location for in-person Family Time. • During the initial phase of reintroducing in-person Family Time, visits should be limited to no more than 6 participants in total, including family members and children. This limit does not include specialized staff to assist with the visit or the staff supervising the visit. • Let parents and caregivers know that during the initial phase of reintroducing in-person family time, Family Time will occur in outside spaces. Before scheduling Family Time, social workers should be clear with all participants that they will need to answer screening questions, wear a mask, and follow the guidelines outlined below. • Understandably, parents and caregivers may have questions related to these guidelines. It is important to spend time answering questions and ensuring everyone understands the guidelines and expectations. • Make sure to coordinate and work collaboratively with caregivers and placement providers to address issues that may arise related to in-person Family Time. If the individual facilitating Family Time identifies issues or concerns during the visit (e.g. adult refusal to wear a mask) it will be important for them to stay in communication and coordinate with network specialists, lead agencies, or the ARC to resolve any concerns.
Conditions that Must Be Met for In-Person Family Time	<p>In order to ensure the safety of everyone involved, in-person Family Time should not occur if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone is COVID-19+, is in isolation due to being COVID-19+, and has not been instructed by their health care provider that they are ready to leave isolation.* • Anyone has been in close contact with someone who is COVID-19+ and is now in quarantine for 14 days. If someone in quarantine** gets tested and the result is negative, they still need to complete the 14-day quarantine. • Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19: Cough, fever greater than 100.0, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, chills, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. • The placement setting is experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19 (recent concerns include outbreaks of cases (usually >2) among staff or youth). This information is readily available from congregate care teams who are monitoring all outbreaks.

	<p>Additionally, children and adults in the following high risk categories may need to take additional precautions or participate in virtual visits only: individuals who are >65 years old, are immunocompromised or on immune-suppressing medications, or have serious medical conditions such as heart disease, chronic lung disease, and pregnant women.</p>
Preparing for Family Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers should prepare children over the age of 2 for the need to wear a face covering throughout Family Time and let them know their parents will also be wearing one. • Depending on the age and developmental stage of the child, you may want to use a virtual Family Time before in-person Family Time for the parent to show the child what they look like with a face mask on. • Parents and social workers can prepare for visitation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-planning activities that can be completed while maintaining social distancing. • Gathering and bringing what is needed to participate in the chosen activities. Age-appropriate activities that can be done outside, from a distance or separately but together: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Batting around balloons ○ Drawing with sidewalk chalk ○ Doing a puzzle or playing a game together but having only one person touch the pieces ○ Going for a walk where it's possible to practice physical distancing ○ Coloring together, but on different pages or books • Bringing food in disposable containers only and in portions limited to what the child can eat during the visit, as no food will be brought back with the child. • Social workers should talk to caregivers after a visit concludes, including precautions they can take after a visit like hand washing and changing clothes.
Pre-Screening Questions To Ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen 1 Day Before a Visit: All participants should be screened by telephone or video 1 day prior to a visit. If a child is being transported for a visit, screening questions should be asked of the household where the child resides before the transport occurs. • Participants will also be screened in person at the time of visit. <p>Screening questions to ask include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you or anyone in your household have symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle pain, chills, or new loss of taste or smell? ○ Do you or anyone in your household have a fever (100.0 F or higher)? ○ Have you or anyone in your household tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days or been asked to quarantine due to exposure? <p>If a parent or child (or their caregiver) answers yes to any of these questions the in-person visit cannot occur and will need to be rescheduled or conducted virtually.</p>
Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following supplies should be available for the family visit:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disinfecting wipes and/or other disinfecting cleaning products ○ Soap and running water or hand sanitizer ○ Cloth face coverings or disposable masks for all participants to wear. If a participant does not have a mask, one will be provided to them. ○ Gloves (medical grade nitril or latex)
Transportation to and from Family Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone who is self-quarantining due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual or self-isolating because they are sick, SHOULD NOT provide transportation to Family Time. • If possible, the same person should transport the child to each Family Time. • Everyone in the vehicle older than two years should wear a cloth face mask/covering while in the vehicle, except for anyone for whom use of a face mask/covering would be damaging to their health or anyone who is developmentally unable to use a face mask/covering. • Children should sit in the back seat, utilizing car and booster seats when applicable. • No more than two children should be transported together unless they live in the same household. • If the weather allows, windows should be opened slightly to support air flow. If this is not possible, set the ventilation system to high in the vehicle and do not recirculate conditioned air. • The person providing transportation should bring the child to the agreed upon Family Time location. No one outside of the vehicle should touch the door handles, car seats, or vehicle's interior. • Frequently-touched areas of the vehicle should be wiped down with disinfectant between transportation and after travel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For car seats, buckles and latches should be wiped down before and after transport.
Precautions to Take During Family Time	
Face Coverings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone above the age of 2 must wear a face mask/covering over the nose and mouth, unless the use of a face mask/covering would be damaging to the person's health or anyone who is developmentally unable to use a face mask/covering. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parents can briefly pull down their face covering to remind the child or youth of who they are. ○ Participants may pull down their face coverings for eating and drinking. ○ If the child takes off their face mask/covering they should be encouraged by the adults to keep it on. No visit will be cancelled if the child refuses to keep the face mask/covering on. <p>All Family Time participants should follow the CDC guidelines regarding the use of disposable or cloth face coverings, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Washing hands before putting the face covering on; 2. Making sure both mouth and nose are covered; 3. Hooking the loops around ears or tying the face covering snugly around the head; 4. Refraining from touching the face covering or pulling it down during use;

	<p>5. Removing the face covering without touching eyes, nose, or mouth and immediately washing hands after removal; and</p> <p>6. Washing the face covering between uses and ensuring it is completely dry before using it again.</p>
Maintaining Distance When Possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging that physical contact may be desired by parents and children who have not seen each other for several months, visits should be monitored with risk reduction in mind. Avoid close face-to-face contact and kissing while allowing hugging with faces in opposite direction or hugging legs. • Limiting close physical contact to less than 15 minutes. • Masks should be worn at all times (except children under 2 and others who are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons). • Adults should maintain social distancing to the maximum extent possible during the visit.
Bringing Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the visit food should not be shared. • All snacks and drinks should be in individual containers so that sharing does not occur. • Parents should wash hands or use hand sanitizer before giving a child food. Plastic spoons or forks should be used and disposed of after the visit. If the parent brings a container that cannot be thrown away or if there is extra food, the parents would need to bring the container and food home with them.
Enhanced Cleaning and/or Disinfecting Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone should wash and/or sanitize their hands before putting on a face mask/covering (PPE) and after they take it off. • Everyone should wash and/or sanitize their hands right before the in-person Family Time, regularly throughout the visit, and immediately after the visit is done. • Everyone should clean frequently touched surfaces, such as car doors, steering wheels, doorknobs, phones, and pens. • Toys that cannot be cleaned, sanitized, or washed immediately after Family Time should not be used. Children's books and other paper-based materials like envelopes are not considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfecting. • When washing, feeding, or holding young children, adults can protect themselves by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wearing layered clothing that can be removed after a visit ○ Wearing long hair up off the collar in a ponytail or other updo. ○ Washing their hands, neck and other places touched by a child's secretions. ○ Changing the child's clothes if secretions (e.g., drool) are on the child's clothes. ○ Changing the adult's top if there are secretions on it and washing their hands again. ○ Placing contaminated items in a plastic bag or immediately washing them in a washing machine.

* **Isolation** - The separation or restriction of activities of an ill person with symptoms or with a confirmed diagnosis of a contagious disease from those who are well.

****Quarantine** - The separation or restriction of movement of well persons who might have been exposed to a communicable disease while determining if they become ill.